

Environmental Protection Agency

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§ 13.18 Installment payments.

(a) Whenever, feasible, and except as otherwise provided by law, debts owed to the United States, together with interest, penalty and administrative costs, as required by § 13.11, will be collected in a single payment. However, where the Administrator determines that a debtor is financially unable to pay the indebtedness in a single payment or that an alternative payment mechanism is in the best interest of the United States, the Administrator may approve repayment of the debt in installments. The debtor has the burden of establishing that it is financially unable to pay the debt in a single payment or that an alternative payment mechanism is warranted. If the Administrator agrees to accept payment by installments, the Administrator may require a debtor to execute a written agreement which specifies all the terms of the repayment arrangement and which contains a provision accelerating the debt in the event of default. The size and frequency of installment payments will bear a reasonable relation to the size of the debt and the debtor's ability to pay. The installment payments will be sufficient in size and frequency to liquidate the debt in not more than 3 years, unless the Administrator determines that a longer period is required. Installment payments of less than \$50 per month generally will not be accepted, but may be accepted where the debtor's financial or other circumstances justify. If the debt is unsecured, the Administrator may require the debtor to execute a confess-judgment note with a tax carry-forward and a tax carry-back provision. Where the Administrator secures a confess-judgment note, the Administrator will provide the debtor a written explanation of the consequences of the debtor's signing the note.

(b) If a debtor owes more than one debt and designates how a voluntary installment payment is to be applied among the debts, that designation will be approved if the Administrator determines that the designation is in the best interest of the United States. If the debtor does not designate how the payment is to be applied, the Administrator will apply the payment to the

various debts in accordance with the best interest of the United States, paying special attention to applicable statutes of limitations.

§ 13.19 Analysis of costs; automation; prevention of overpayments, delinquencies or defaults.

(a) The Administrator may periodically compare EPA's costs in handling debts with the amounts it collects,

(b) The Administrator may periodically consider the need, feasibility, and cost effectiveness of automated debt collection operations.

(c) The Administrator may establish internal controls to identify the causes of overpayments and delinquencies and may issue procedures to prevent future occurrences of the identified problems.

Subpart C—Administrative Offset

§ 13.20 Administrative offset of general debts.

This subpart provides for EPA's collection of debts by administrative offset under section 5 of the Debt Collection Act of 1982 (31 U.S.C. 3716), other statutory authorities and the common law. It does not apply to offsets against employee salaries covered by §§ 13.21, 13.22 and 13.23 of this subpart. EPA will collect debts by administrative offsets where it determines that such collections are feasible and are not otherwise prohibited by statute or contract.

EPA will decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether collection by administrative offset is feasible and that its use furthers and protects the interest of the United States.

(a) *Standards.* (1) The Administrator collects debts by administrative offset if—

(i) The debt is certain in amount;

(ii) Efforts to obtain direct payment from the debtor have been, or would most likely be, unsuccessful or the Administrator and the debtor agree to the offset;

(iii) Offset is not expressly or implicitly prohibited by statute, regulation or contract;

(iv) Offset is cost-effective or has significant deterrent value;

(v) Offset does not substantially impair or defeat program objectives; and

(vi) Offset is best suited to further and protect the Government's interest.

(2) The Administrator may, in determining the method and amount of the offset, consider the financial impact on the debtor.

(b) *Interagency offset.* The Administrator may offset a debt owed to another Federal agency from amounts due or payable by EPA to the debtor, or may request another Federal agency to offset a debt owed to EPA. The Administrator may request the Internal Revenue Service to offset an overdue debt from a Federal income tax refund due a debtor where reasonable attempts to obtain payment have failed. Interagency offsets from employee salaries will be made in accordance with the procedures contained in §§ 13.22 and 13.23.

(c) *Multiple debts.* Where moneys are available for offset against multiple debts of a debtor, it will be applied in accordance with the best interest of the Government as determined by the Administrator on a case-by-case basis.

(d) *Statutory bar to offset.* Administrative offset will not be made more than 10 years after the Government's right to collect the debt first accrued, unless facts material to the Government's right to collect the debt were not known and could not have been known through the exercise of reasonable care by the officer responsible for discovering or collecting the debt. For purposes of offset, the right to collect a debt accrues when the appropriate EPA official determines that a debt exists (e.g., contracting officer, grant award official, etc.), when it is affirmed by an administrative appeal or a court having jurisdiction, or when a debtor defaults on a payment agreement, whichever is latest. An offset occurs when money payable to the debtor is first withheld or when EPA requests offset from money held by another agency.

(e) *Pre-offset notice.* Before initiating offset, the Administrator sends the debtor written notice of:

(1) The basis for and the amount of the debt as well as the Agency's intention to collect the debt by offset if payment or satisfactory response has not been received within 30 days of the notice;

(2) The debtor's right to submit an alternative repayment schedule, to inspect and copy agency records pertaining to the debt, to request review of the determination of indebtedness or to apply for waiver under any available statute or regulation; and

(3) Applicable interest, penalty charges and administrative costs.

(f) *Alternative repayment.* The Administrator may, at the Administrator's discretion, enter into a repayment agreement with the debtor in lieu of offset. In deciding whether to accept payment of the debt by an alternative repayment agreement, the Administrator may consider such factors as the amount of the debt, the length of the proposed repayment period, whether the debtor is willing to sign a confession-judgment note, past Agency dealings with the debtor, documentation submitted by the debtor indicating that an offset will cause undue financial hardship, and the debtor's financial ability to adhere to the terms of a repayment agreement. The Administrator may require financial documentation from the debtor before considering the repayment arrangement.

(g) *Review of administrative determination.* (1) A debt will not be offset while a debtor is seeking either formal or informal review of the validity of the debt under this section or under another statute, regulation or contract. However, interest, penalty and administrative costs will continue to accrue during this period, unless otherwise waived by the Administrator. The Administrator may initiate offset as soon as practical after completion of review or after a debtor waives the opportunity to request review.

(2) The Administrator may administratively offset a debt prior to the completion of a formal or informal review where the determines that:

(i) Failure to take the offset would substantially prejudice EPA's ability to collect the debt; and

(ii) The time before the first offset is to be made does not reasonably permit the completion of the review procedures. (Offsets taken prior to completion of the review process will be followed promptly by the completion of

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the process. Amounts recovered by offset but later found not to be owed will be refunded promptly.)

(3) The debtor must provide a written request for review of the decision to offset the debt no later than 15 days after the date of the notice of the offset unless a different time is specifically prescribed. The debtor's request must state the basis for the request for review.

(4) The Administrator may grant an extension of time for filing a request for review if the debtor shows good cause for the late filing. A debtor who fails timely to file or to request an extension waives the right to review.

(5) The Administrator will issue, no later than 60 days after the filing of the request, a written final decision based on the evidence, record and applicable law.

§ 13.21 Employee salary offset—general.

(a) *Purpose.* This section establishes EPA's policies and procedures for recovery of debts owed to the United States by installment collection from the current pay account of an employee.

(b) *Scope.* The provisions of this section apply to collection by salary offset under 5 U.S.C. 5514 of debts owed EPA and debts owed to other Federal agencies by EPA employees. This section does not apply to debts owed EPA arising from travel advances under 5 U.S.C. 5705, employee training expenses under 5 U.S.C. 4108 and to other debts where collection by salary offset is explicitly provided for or prohibited by another statute.

(c) *References.* The following statutes and regulations apply to EPA's recovery of debts due the United States by salary offset:

(1) 5 U.S.C. 5514, as amended, governing the installment collection of debts;

(2) 31 U.S.C. 3716, governing the liquidation of debts by administrative offset;

(3) 5 CFR part 550, subpart K, setting forth the minimum requirements for executive agency regulations on salary offset; and

(4) 4 CFR parts 101–105, the Federal Claims Collection Standards.

§ 13.22 Salary offset when EPA is the creditor agency.

(a) *Entitlement to notice, hearing, written response and decision.* (1) Prior to initiating collection action through salary offset, EPA will first provide the employee with the opportunity to pay in full the amount owed, unless such notification will compromise the Government's ultimate ability to collect the debt.

(2) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, each employee from whom the Agency proposes to collect a debt by salary offset under this section is entitled to receive a written notice as described in paragraph (c) of this section.

(3) Each employee owing a debt to the United States which will be collected by salary offset is entitled to request a hearing on the debt. This request must be filed as prescribed in paragraph (d) of this section. The Agency will make appropriate hearing arrangements which are consistent with law and regulations. Where a hearing is held, the employee is entitled to a written decision on the following issues:

(i) The determination of the Agency concerning the existence or amount of the debt; and

(ii) The repayment schedule, if it was not established by written agreement between the employee and the Agency.

(b) *Exceptions to entitlement to notice, hearing, written response and final decision.* The procedural requirements of paragraph (a) of this section are not applicable to any adjustment of pay arising out of an employee's election of coverage or a change in coverage under a Federal benefits program (such as health insurance) requiring periodic deductions from pay, if the amount to be recovered was accumulated over four pay periods or less. However, if the amount to be recovered was accumulated over more than four pay periods the full procedures prescribed under paragraph (d) of this section will be extended to the employee.

(c) *Notification before deductions begin.* Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, deductions will not be made unless the employee is first provided with a minimum of 30 calendar days written notice. Notice will be sent